

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Claims 1-4 (Canceled).

Claim 5 (Canceled).

Claims 6-21 (Canceled).

22. (New) A method of automatically composing a media article according to a template specifying the desired characteristics of the media article and having a plurality of sections, each of which may contain a query, the method comprising:

iteratively finding each section in the template and executing any query in that section to return a selection of media objects each of which is associated with a corresponding media element and comprises digital metadata about its respective media element; and

analysing the digital metadata of the selected media objects, which digital metadata includes:

related media object identity data identifying a related media object, the media object containing the related media object identity data and the related media object being referred to as related media objects, and relationship data which indicates the type of relationship between what is represented by the respective media elements corresponding to the related media objects;

wherein the method further comprises, in the event that the selected media objects include related media objects, arranging the media elements associated with the selected media objects, or identifiers thereof, in a media article in dependence upon the type of relationship of the related media objects as determined by the metadata analysis.

23. (New) A method according to claim 22 further comprising generating said related media object identity data and said relationship data.

24. (New) A method according to claim 22 wherein said metadata of each media object further comprises content data indicating what is represented by the media object's corresponding media element, and wherein said step of iteratively finding and executing queries comprises selecting, from a plurality of media elements, one or more media elements in dependence upon said content data.

25. (New) A method according to claim 22 wherein said arranging step arranges said media elements so as to determine the order in which the user sees or hears what is represented by the selected media elements.

26. (New) A method according to claim 22 in which said media elements contain video data.

27. (New) A media article composition apparatus comprising:

one or more memory devices storing, for each of a plurality of media elements, metadata including:

related media object identity data identifying a related media object,

the media object containing the related media object identity data and the related media object being referred to as related media objects, and

relationship data which indicates the type of relationship between what is represented by the respective media elements corresponding to the related media objects;

wherein the apparatus further comprises one or more digital processors in communication with said one or more memory devices and operable to compose a media article according to a template specifying the desired characteristics of the media article and having a plurality of sections, each of which may contain a query, by:

iteratively finding each section in the template and executing any query in that section to return a selection of media objects each of which is associated with a corresponding media element;

analysing the metadata of the selected media objects; and, in the event that the selected media objects include related media objects,

arranging the media elements associated with the selected media objects, or identifiers thereof, in a media article in dependence upon the type of relationship of the related media objects as determined by the metadata analysis.

28. (New) An apparatus according to claim 27 in which said relationship data indicates a causal type of relationship between what is represented by one media element and what is represented by the related media element.

29. (New) An apparatus according to claim 27 wherein said one or more processors are further operable to provide a user with an interface enabling the user to enter said relationship data.

30. (New) An apparatus according to claim 27 wherein:
said metadata is stored in a database; and
said one or more processors are further operable to query said database to obtain identifiers of media elements whose associated metadata meets one or more conditions specified in said query.

31. (New) An apparatus according to claim 30 in which said database comprises an object-oriented database and metadata for each media element is stored as an object in said object-oriented database.

32. (New) An apparatus according to claim 27 further comprising a content store storing a plurality of media elements, said metadata for each media element including a pointer to the location of said media element in said content store.

33. (New) An apparatus according to claim 27 wherein:

said template lists a plurality of slots to be filled, and, for each slot, one or more associated requirements of media elements for filling said slot; and

 said one or more processors are further arranged in operation to select media elements by, for each of said slots, retrieving one or more identifiers of media elements whose metadata accords with said one or more requirements for said slots.